



bigmouth buffalo

Ictiobus cyprinellus

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| Kingdom: | Animalia |
| Division/Phylum: | Chordata - vertebrates |
| Class: | Osteichthyes |
| Order: | Cypriniformes |
| Family: | Catostomidae |

Features

The bigmouth buffalo typically averages two to five pounds and is 15 to 27 inches long, but it may attain a maximum length of 40 inches. The large head contains a sucker-type mouth with large lips. The body is brown or coppery on the back, black to yellow-green on the sides, and white to yellow on the belly. The fins are brown or black. The dorsal fin is long.

Natural History

The bigmouth buffalo lives in deep pools of rivers, lakes, and large impoundments. It lives in schools in midwater or near the bottom. It eats insects and small crustaceans that it strains from the water with its gill rakers (long, hard extensions of the bones supporting the gills). It matures at age three and spawns in spring. The female deposits about 400,000 eggs that are scattered over the bottom in shallow water. Eggs hatch in eight to 14 days. The bigmouth buffalo has an average lifespan of seven to eight years.

Habitats

constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs; natural lakes and prairie marshes; interior rivers and streams; Mississippi River; Missouri River

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.